



## Origin of Family, Property and State

Today we feature Chapter 9, the chapter called “Barbarism and Civilisation”, of Frederick Engels’ book “[The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State](#)”. The Chapter is attached, and linked below as a download.

If you find them difficult, don’t worry too much about the first three paragraphs of this chapter. They partly refer to previous chapters. The remainder of Chapter 9 is self-contained.

“The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State” is a classic of the first rank, both within the field of Marxism, and more widely.

Lenin relied on it, and referred to it often for the illumination that it gives to the revolutionary question of The State and to the necessity of the withering away of the State.

But this work of Engels’ is also foundational in Archaeology and Paleoanthropology (i.e. the study of the pre-history of human society), just as Engels’ “[The Condition of the Working Class in](#)

[England](#)” was foundational to the study of the formation of cities – Urbanism (also called Urban Studies or Town Planning). Engels, who never formally went to a university, is one of the towering historic founders of scholarly disciplines.

## **Morgan and Marx**

Marx had already worked on source material for this project, including on Henry Morgan’s 1877 eyewitness book called “[Ancient Society](#)”. Engels found Marx’s working papers after Marx’s death in 1883 and immediately set to work to prepare a book from them for publication.

The particular contribution of “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State” is that it shows the common, interdependent origin of private property and the State, plus the fall of the women into the oppressive condition which they still continue to suffer, and also the institutions of money, writing and law.

The simultaneous revolutionary break in all of these things marks the end of pre-history and the beginning of history, which as Marx and Engels had noted in the [Communist Manifesto](#), was from that point onwards “a history of class struggles”.

The transition from prehistoric communism into class society took place a long time ago in some parts of the world, and much more recently in other parts. In Egypt and Iraq (Mesopotamia) it may have happened more than five thousand years ago. In most other parts of the world the transition was quite recent.

## Communism, a necessity for women

The simultaneous nature of the triple catastrophe (property, state and downfall of women) means that the remedy for all three will likewise have to be simultaneous. The urgent abolition or “withering away” of the State is for that reason a woman’s issue, and the socialist project is a woman’s project, because they are all part of the same complex of oppressions. Communism is a necessity for women.

The reversal of the downfall of the women can only be achieved by the abolition of property and the State. Likewise, the abolition of property and the State cannot be achieved without the conscious restoration of women to their proper place in human society. All three goals have to be achieved together. The three goals are actually the same goal, and the name of it is [communism](#).

**Image:** Another way of explaining the origins of human society: Adam, Eve, and the Apple (The Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil), by [Tamara de Lempicka](#). The middle image is a representation of a “money tree” from the Internet. The other image is from the front of Thomas Hobbes’ “Leviathan”, which revealed the State in the mid-seventeenth century.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Origin of Family, Property and State, Chapter 9, 1884, Engels](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).